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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Summary

Libyan Position and US Opportunities in Chad

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The recent defection of Goukouni loyalists to the Chadian Government poses a new threat to the Libyan force in Chad. A program of harassment by Chadian forces could substantially increase the political and financial cost to Libyan leader Qadhafi of maintaining a military presence in northern Chad. Such a campaign would have to be carried out over a period of several months and be actively supported by either Paris or Washington. In the meantime, there are indications that personality differences and mutual mistrust are hampering efforts by the Habre government in N'Djamena to carry out joint operations with its newly professed allies.

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For the moment, Qadhafi believes he has the upper hand militarily in Chad and is likely to press for a military solution against the pro-Habre guerrillas. At the same time, he will seek to pursue diplomatic negotiations, particularly with the French. Qadhafi and the French could strike a deal involving the withdrawal of Libyan forces to the Aozou Strip in exchange for a French agreement to work to reduce US support for N'Djamena.

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In our view, keeping Qadhafi bogged down in Chad serves US interests by highlighting to Libyans both inside and outside the military one of Qadhafi's more unpopular foreign adventures. A protracted and costly campaign could become a key destabilizing factor in the Libyan Army. Nevertheless, a willingness by Washington

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to provide N'Djamena with extensive long-term assistance would risk irritating the French, who view Francophone Africa as their own preserve and regulate the supply of arms to Habre as a way to control the pace of military action. A high US profile in N'Djamena also risks an effort by Habre to militarily win northern Chad back from the Libyans, an outcome he is unlikely to achieve. [REDACTED]

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CURRENT SETTING

In the last three months, the military situation in Chad has undergone the most radical change since the Libyans consolidated their hold on the north in 1983. The defection from the Libyan-backed GUNT coalition of the Forces Armees Populaire (FAP)--the faction loyal to ex-GUNT chief Goukouni--threatens Libyan lines of communication in Chad and endangers Libyan garrisons. Chadian President Habre is trying to exploit the defection by sending government units across the 16th Parallel--the delineation of the defacto partition of Chad--to harass the Libyans. We estimate that as many as 500 government troops have infiltrated the Tibesti--the mountainous region in northwestern Chad--to join FAP units. Libyan casualties in recent fighting are the heaviest since 1983 and are likely to increase as Chadian Government commanders consolidate their campaign. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Libyans have responded to this threat by reorganizing and reinforcing their units in Chad. We believe the Libyan force now numbers between 6,000 and 7,000, an increase of over 1,000 in the last six weeks.

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MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

Libya: The Limits of Aggression

We believe that the Libyan force now in Chad will be able to hold northern Chad against any combination of units of FAP and FANT (Forces Armees Nationales Chadienne--government forces). The Libyans in Chad are as strong and as well equipped as they were in 1983 when they expelled Habre's best forces from Faya Largeau in a day. Libyan firepower at present is sufficient to

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prevent the Chadians from seizing Libyans garrisons, although the increased availability to N'Djamena of air defense and antitank missiles is likely to result in higher Libyan casualties than in past encounters.* All major Libyan garrisons in Chad have airfields which allow for reinforcement and resupply by air should any come under siege. At most, the Libyans may abandon their southernmost garrison at Fada to make their battle lines more efficient. [REDACTED]

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The Libyan force is inadequate, however, to quickly suppress a well-led joint guerrilla campaign by FAP and FANT fighters in the north.** Even with the aircraft that have been dispatched to support the Libyan force in the last few months, finding and striking units scattered in the rugged Tibesti mountains has been very difficult. In addition, the guerrillas are avoiding decisive combat against superior forces--they evacuated Kika in early December when facing a Libyan assault. The Libyan force appears to be organizing for efforts to find, trap, and destroy pockets of guerrillas, but such a campaign could drag on for months. In the meantime, rebel raids and ambushes could cost Libya a steady flow of casualties. [REDACTED]

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The current Libyan force in Chad also is inadequate to launch a major offensive across the 16th Parallel, in our view. As long as the Chadians are a viable guerrilla threat to the Libyan rear, the Libyans now in Chad will be largely occupied with securing the north. For the Libyans to begin seizing and holding territory in southern Chad, they would need:

* Provision of Stinger air defense missiles to the Chadians would not fundamentally change this equation, in our view. The Chadians have already shot down at least two Libyan aircraft since October without using the Redeye missiles previously provided by Washington. This may already be enough to prompt the Libyans to raise their attack profiles to higher altitudes, beyond the reach of either the Redeye or the Stinger. This would reduce Libyan bombing accuracy, of course, but not so much as to alleviate the Chadians' intense fears of the air threat. [REDACTED]

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** We estimate that the Libyans' task of securing the Tibesti would not be appreciably eased by the use of napalm, although they are likely to take that measure soon. Effective use of napalm in the barren Tibesti mountains would require either massive quantities--limiting aircraft available for other important bombing missions--or a precision accuracy that the Libyans have never demonstrated. A Libyan use of toxic gasses, as Chadian press has alleged, would be more worrisome than napalm because of its potential psychological impact on the Chadian fighters. We have yet to confirm the Libyan possession of chemical ordnance, however, and believe that Qadhafi would not order its use unless the Libyan situation became desperate. Even then, we doubt the the Libyans could have the volume of chemical ordnance that would be required to completely neutralize the Chadian opposition in the Tibesti. [REDACTED]

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- as many as 3,000 additional troops;
- at least 100 additional tank transporters;
- confidence that the French would not intervene.

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Chad: In Search of Aid

Comments by Chadian President Habre to US officials [] indicate his eagerness to conduct a guerrilla campaign against the Libyans in the north, but he will need increased French or US support to sustain it. Habre has already deployed over 1,500 men, mostly from his elite Presidential Guard, north of the 16th Parallel to resupply and reinforce FAP forces, according to the US Defense Attache in Paris. Habre also has sent large convoys through Niger to equip the FAP guerrillas in the Tibesti. []

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A sustained campaign of joint FANT and FAP operations could create serious difficulties for the Libyans in Chad. By harassing the Libyan garrisons, ambushing convoys, and trapping patrols, the Chadians could cost the Libyans up to one hundred casualties a month for the first three to four months, with the number dropping to perhaps half that as the Libyans gain experience in guerrilla warfare. The harassment, combined with the frustration of trying to defeat an enemy that will not fight conclusive battles, almost certainly will increase opposition to the war among the Libyan military. []

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Foreign resupply will be essential to any sustained guerrilla campaign. Battle expenditures, harsh desert conditions, and poor Chadian maintenance practices will combine to quickly reduce Habre's stocks to dangerously low levels. Even now, critically low fuel reserves are restraining FANT operations, and maintenance problems have sidelined Chad's new multiple rocket launchers, [] has already tapped his strategic reserves to wage a guerrilla campaign, but he might become less willing to draw down his stockpile if the effectiveness of the guerrillas becomes suspect and continued foreign resupply is not assured. []

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We regard the current FANT-FAP union as a fragile marriage of convenience. [] remains leery about giving his better weapons to a group that has fought him since 1976. He probably is skeptical of both their loyalty and their willingness to stand up under pressure. It remains unclear whether the FAP ambushes of Libyan patrols last week will be enough to allay Habre's reservations. For their part, if FAP leaders sense that their fighters are to be used as cannon fodder for the government or to be absorbed into government forces to the point that they lose their distinct identity, friction could quickly become critical; at the least, the guerrilla campaign would be slowed, at worst, the alliance would collapse. []

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If the FANT/FAP alliance breaks apart, lesser guerrilla harassment of the Libyans can continue from across the 16th Parallel, but the threat to the Libyan rear will be reduced considerably.

-- If the FAP returned to the Libyan fold, the Libyans could secure the Tibesti quickly. The FANT units that have joined the FAP in the Tibesti may remain, but we doubt that they would be more successful than in late 1983, when they posed little more than a nuisance to the Libyans.

-- If the FAP refused to rejoin other Libyan-backed rebels, it might try to live off the local populace in the Tibesti or escape into southern Chad or Niger. Even if FAP elements remained in northern Chad, they would not, in our view, be able to undertake a guerrilla campaign against the Libyans for more than a few months without regular outside resupply.

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DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS

Qadhafi on the Political Defensive

Qadhafi probably views the increased fighting as threatening his immediate goal of securing northern Chad against what he believes would be the eventual establishment of a US or French backed insurgency in southern Libya--an area inhabited by Toubou tribesmen traditionally resistant to Tripoli's control. In addition, the defection of Goukouni's following strengthens Habre's ability to resist Tripoli's efforts to install a pro-Libyan regime in N'Djamena as a base for subversive activities against other pro-Western regimes in the region.

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Although Qadhafi probably recognizes the French have preponderant influence in Chad, available evidence indicates he is especially worried about US intentions there.

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In our view, Qadhafi probably also sees Washington as playing on Habre's inherent desire to go after Libyan forces and that increased US influence in N'Djamena would result in a more aggressive Chadian posture than that tolerated by Paris. Qadhafi's decision to intervene in Chad in 1983 was based in part on fear that Habre would become a US puppet and permit the establishment of US bases in Chad.

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We believe that for the moment, Qadhafi probably will pursue the option of a decisive military victory over the Habre-Goukouni coalition. He almost certainly believes his armed forces have

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[redacted]

the capability to suppress quickly the insurgency. Moreover, increased US and French support to Habre probably has confirmed Qadhafi's fears of a developing security threat to southern Libya and hardened his resolve to militarily quash the Habre-Goukouni coalition. [redacted]

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In the likely event Libyan forces are unable to suppress the insurgency in the near term, Qadhafi will reassess his options. The more costly military operations become--in terms of money and lives--the greater the likelihood that domestic opposition to Qadhafi's regime will grow. [redacted]

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[redacted] Qadhafi's military intervention in Chad has been unpopular since the latest deployment of Libyan forces there in late 1983.

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[redacted]

Increased domestic discontent over Chad could prompt Qadhafi to seek a face-saving solution. He may also move in this direction if he perceives a likelihood of prolonged fighting. Qadhafi has always been careful to avoid foreclosing the diplomatic option in Chad. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Since 1983, Qadhafi at varying times has attempted to engage Senegal, Congo, Gabon, Nigeria, and Morocco in mediation efforts. In playing his diplomatic cards, Qadhafi would try to string negotiations out to gain maximum relief from Habre's campaign in the north. [redacted]

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Qadhafi's posturing may include an offer to withdraw Libyan forces as part of a deal that lessened US and French influence in N'Djamena. He probably would demand a withdrawal of French troops and reestablishment of a Libyan diplomatic presence in N'Djamena that could be used to monitor US and French activities there, as well as subvert Habre's regime. He also would press strongly for a reduction of the US profile in Chad; for example, he would seek to limit the number and activities of US Government personnel stationed there, particularly those dealing with intelligence and military affairs. [redacted]

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As part of a cease fire agreement, he might even make token withdrawals of Libyan troops as far north as the Aozou Strip to test French and Chadian willingness to make concessions. In our view, he would become more serious about negotiating if he detected a willingness by France to agree to a demilitarized zone between the Aozou Strip and the 16th Parallel that would be

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policed by a combined African and Libyan peacekeeping force. In our opinion, Qadhafi would strongly resist any proposal that weakens Libya's ability to exert military control over northern Chad as a buffer against external threats. [redacted]

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Qadhafi's Other Options

Based on his past behavior, we anticipate that Qadhafi would accompany diplomatic initiatives with military and terrorist initiatives to raise the cost of the conflict to Habre and his supporters. Among his options are:

--Terrorism against N'Djamena. [redacted]

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[redacted] Libya already is preparing for terrorist operations.

--Terrorism against French interests in Africa or its overseas territories, possibly including the seizure of French hostages in Libya or elsewhere. Libya has briefly held French hostages in the past and Qadhafi almost certainly recognizes the priority Paris has placed on gaining release of their hostages in Lebanon.

--Threatening to widen the war by regularly using Sudanese and Nigerien territory. [redacted]

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--Sponsoring a coup or terrorist activity against moderate pro-West regimes bordering on Chad that traditionally have supported Habre, such as Niger and Cameroon. [redacted]

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--Isolated bombing of Abeche, Biltine, or any stronghold south of the 16th Parallel not protected by French air defenses. [redacted]

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Qadhafi would try to exploit any differences between France and the United States on the Chad issue. During his meeting with French President Mitterrand on Crete in November 1984, he attempted to forge a broad agreement with Paris aimed in part at generally minimizing US influence in N'Djamena and could do so again. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

To increase the incentive for French support in limiting US activities in Chad, Qadhafi may offer Paris lucrative commercial opportunities in Libya. [REDACTED]

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France: The Weak Link

The new equation in northern Chad does not appear to have changed Paris' basic position on the war: *Paris continues to see a diplomatic settlement as the best outcome short of a unilateral Libyan withdrawal.*

Although the French do not seem to view a negotiated settlement as urgent, an attempt at dialogue with Qadhafi has several benefits for them:

--Diplomacy minimizes the potential for French combat losses and the high political price casualties would bring to both Mitterrand and Chirac.

--It reduces the prospect of Libyan-sponsored terrorism against French interests.

--As long as the Libyans remain north of the 16th Parallel, French commitments to protect N'Djamena from Libyan aggression are maintained.

--A permanent Libyan withdrawal to the Aozou Strip would vindicate Mitterrand's handling of the Chad War since 1983. [REDACTED]

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A reliable State Department source reports that Prime Minister Chirac has been in secret contact with Qadhafi on Chad [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The French reiterated their strong opposition to any Libyan incursion across the 16th Parallel, but we believe they also held out the possibility of commercial accords. Other carrots the French may be prepared to offer Tripoli include:

--Allowing some Libyan investment in recently denationalized French firms.

--Releasing some of the \$227 million worth of aircraft, air defense parts and vehicles, and missiles for which Tripoli already has paid.

--New deals on items such as spare parts and commercial vehicles. [REDACTED]

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In return, we believe the minimum French demand would be a verifiable Libyan withdrawal to the Aozou Strip and Libyan

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recognition of a Habre-led government. In light of their being bluffed out of Chad by Qadhafi in 1984, Paris almost certainly would make sure that mutual withdrawal was phased and verifiable. Indeed, we believe the earlier "withdrawal"--which President Mitterrand agreed to and Prime Minister Chirac denounced--could be a significant factor which is slowing negotiations now, due to rivalries within the French Government. [redacted]

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We believe the French view the recent FANT/FAP rapprochement as an opportunity to raise the cost to Libya of its occupation of northern Chad, making Tripoli more amenable to a negotiated settlement. The result is a delicate French effort to turn up the heat in northern Chad while avoiding actions likely to close off negotiating avenues or to prompt Qadhafi to lash out beyond northern Chad. The French have recently increased their shipments of arms and ammunition to Habre to promote the guerrilla campaign--including airdropping supplies in the Tibesti this week--and are probably willing to coordinate further support with Washington. We anticipate, however, that the French will keep these supplies below the level Habre would require for major offensive operations. Paris is also likely to lobby Washington to withhold from Habre more sophisticated weaponry that might embolden him to try to take and hold Libyan-occupied territory. [redacted]

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The French are likely to take a tougher line in Chad only if they see the credibility of their commitments in Francophone Africa in grave jeopardy. In general, we would expect the French to do whatever is necessary to preserve the Habre Government from defeat by Libya and its Chadian surrogates. If that government were threatened by an impending military defeat, Paris would even be willing to order French troops into combat. The movement of Libyan fighter aircraft to Ouadi Doum--from which they could attack southern Chad--or a raid by Libyan troops south of the 16th Parallel probably would prompt a French airstrike. The odds are about even that French forces would intervene if a major FAP/FANT force appeared on the verge of being wiped out in the north. These odds would shift sharply in favor of intervention if Paris had incontrovertible proof that the Libyans were using chemical weapons. [redacted]

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the French have slightly increased their contingent in N'Djamena, upgraded the airfield there, and alerted potential reinforcements in France. [redacted]

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There are some hardliners in the French Government who view Qadhafi's newest dilemma in Chad as the opportunity to pursue the military option. Defense Minister Giraud and External Intelligence Chief Imbot both appear to be in favor of sponsoring a broader FANT offensive in the north, [redacted]

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[redacted] We believe that the influence of the hardliners may increase if the negotiating option leads nowhere and Libya's military position in Chad weakens. If the Libyan military presence in northern Chad were in jeopardy, the French might increase the pressure through more arms deliveries to the FANT and FAP. We do not believe, however, that they would take

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[redacted]

an active role themselves in an effort to topple Qadhafi. Indeed, we believe France would continue to oppose the notion of Washington using Chad to get at Qadhafi himself. [redacted]

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US INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Washington's interests in Chad would be served best by a protracted guerrilla campaign that bleeds Qadhafi in both money and manpower. In this scenario, increased opposition among military officers and the public to Qadhafi's costly attempt to retain hegemony over northern Chad could be an important contributory factor in motivating a coup. A precipitate unilateral Libyan withdrawal--which we consider unlikely--would humiliate Qadhafi, but probably not hurt his political position as much as would a protracted Chadian insurgency. [redacted]

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Transforming the "Chad problem" into a significant source of political instability, however, requires continued cooperation between erstwhile enemies Habre and Goukouni and a sustained aggressive insurgency in the face of formidable military odds. Our educated guess, based on previous Libyan military involvements in Uganda and Chad, is that Chadian forces would have to inflict between 50 and 100 casualties per month for at least six months to generate a significant domestic backlash in Libya. In the absence of casualties at this level, we believe a similar impact is possible through hit-and-run attacks on Libyan garrisons and the interdiction of much needed supplies. This option, however, would require a much longer period, perhaps over a year. [redacted]

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Another key factor in maintaining pressure on Qadhafi will be French willingness to pass up a potential deal with Libya. If the French are persuaded that Qadhafi is seriously contemplating a face-saving withdrawal, they will be sorely tempted to exploit the opportunity. We believe that the French would agree to persuade the United States to take a less active role in Chad and to press Habre to rely less on US help in exchange for the withdrawal of Libyan forces to the Aozou Strip.* [redacted]

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[redacted] are aware of increased discontent in Libya, we see no indication that they believe encouraging Habre's military activities would increase the chances for Qadhafi's removal or that this is a goal of French policy. [redacted]

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* We believe that Habre would be unable to influence significantly a Franco-Libyan agreement that called for the simultaneous withdrawal of their troops. Habre would be willing to temporarily concede the Aozou Strip to the Libyans, in hopes of regaining it later through either diplomatic or military means. He would probably be willing to permit a Libyan diplomatic presence in N'Djamena if Paris could guarantee that Libyan activities there would be severely restricted. [redacted]

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[redacted]

A potential for a serious rift between the United States and France over Chad probably is the greatest risk to Washington of increasing support for Habre. US and French policies toward Chad so far have been roughly parallel, but the danger exists of misunderstandings, particularly since Paris is traditionally touchy about what they like to see as Washington's interference with Paris' prerogatives in Francophone Africa. [redacted]

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Qadhafi will be watching for indications of US willingness to step in for the French in Chad if Paris cuts a deal. A US refusal to intervene would encourage Qadhafi to resume efforts to install a pro-Libyan government in N'Djamena. Washington's willingness to provide economic and military support for Habre over several years probably would slow down Qadhafi's timetable for subversion, but could provide Tripoli an important opening in seeking to drive a wedge between Paris and Washington. [redacted]

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In our judgment, Habre probably believes the US is unwilling to invest significant resources in Chad to defeat the Libyans or to replace Paris as his principal benefactor. Nevertheless, he will continue to lobby the United States for sophisticated weaponry even at the risk of upsetting the French. We believe that Habre will avoid becoming wedded to one patron, but would try to play off Paris and Washington for additional assistance. There is a possibility, however, that Habre could be lulled into making military-related decisions based on unrealistic expectations of US aid. [redacted]

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We believe the stability of Habre's regime may suffer if increased levels of US and French aid make him unrealistically ambitious in his military efforts in the north. If Habre suffers a major military defeat while trying to take Libyan-held territory in northern Chad, some southerners might accuse him of wasting limited national resources in an effort recapture his tribal homeland. A significant battlefield disaster probably would spark elements in the military to openly question Habre's leadership and his strategy for dealing with Libya. We believe that a sound military defeat during an attack on Fada or Faya might spur defections from the military. We cannot rule out the possibility that military officers or members of his inner circle would move against Habre following a major defeat of Chadian forces. [redacted]

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A perception of Washington's reluctance to provide substantial assistance to Habre could reduce the willingness of other moderate regional governments to support US policy in the region. Of particular concern would be efforts by countries currently helping to transport US equipment to Chad, such as Cameroon, Niger, and Senegal to terminate or dramatically reduce their involvement. [redacted]

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